

Using a Weighted Vest



Purpose: A weighted vest is used as a calming strategy for children who find it difficult to sit still or to remain calm. It should be used in conjunction with opportunities for movement that provides resistance and heavy work such as carrying heavy objects, jumping on a trampoline, bicycling, push ups, etc.

Amount of Weight: a vest should weigh no more than 10% of the child's total body weight

Length of Time: the body accommodates to weight after 10-15 minutes and will not be effective if worn longer than this. However, if the child is engaged in an activity and coping well, it is suggested that the vest remain on until the activity is complete. Removing the vest in the middle of an activity could be disruptive in and of itself. It should not be used again for at least $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour or longer. During this time provide opportunities for resistant movement and heavy work activities.

When to wear:

1. Choose times when the child typically finds it most difficult to sit still and/or to attend to a task.
2. If you can "read" the signals of increasing agitation, anxiety, or excitement, put it on before he has escalated in an attempt to regulate his emotions. Once he has become disregulated, a vest will seldom work to calm him down.
3. A vest can be worn in conjunction with movement during seated activities such as while sitting in a rocking chair, while sitting on an inflatable cushion
4. A vest can also be worn in conjunction with other seating arrangements such as while in a bean bag chair.
5. A vest can also be worn in conjunction with a weighted lap pad which gives pressure to the lower half of the body.

When not to wear: A vest should not be worn during active activities such as during gym, "free time", when moving freely around the room, etc. You may use weight more appropriate to the activity such as pushing a heavy piece of equipment across the room, crawling like a turtle with weight on your back, carrying a heavy weight (medicine ball), walking with a back pack on or using weights on wrists and ankles during animal walks.

Will a weighted vest help my child?:

The only way to determine this is to try it. Children who benefit from weight respond to it immediately. If they continually try to remove it or do not remain calm with it on, then it is unlikely that it is of benefit to them. You can try other forms of weight however as some children respond better to a weighted lap pad or weighted blanket. The same rules apply to them as to the vest.

Note: Careful supervision is suggested regardless of the type of weight used. Weight wearables seldom work when a child is already dysregulated.

For further information regarding a specific child, please contact your occupational therapist